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DEPT FOR CA/FPP; DEPT ALSO PASS TO KCC; POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION
MANAGERS

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TAGS: [CVIS](#) [CPAS](#) [CMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [KFRD](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: Ankara: VALIDATION STUDY OF IRANIAN APPLICANTS

¶1.   Summary: Embassy Ankara recently conducted a validation study of
Iranian applicants who had been issued B-1/B-2 visas in Ankara
during calendar year 2008. The purpose of the study was to
determine the overstay rate of Iranian nonimmigrant visa recipients
and to better inform Post's adjudication practices. Post reviewed
50 percent of all applicants from the study period. Bio data of the
256 individuals who made up the study population were checked
against entry and exit records from the Arrival Departure
Information System (ADIS) database maintained by the Department of
Homeland Security (DHS) US-VISIT Program. The overstay rate among
this population, based on those records, is 11.3 percent. Post will
incorporate lessons learned from its analysis of subjects who
overstayed for future adjudications. End Summary.

BACKGROUND:

¶2.   Ankara is a designated Iranian-processing post and handles the
majority of the Iranian cases in Turkey, which includes Iranian
nonimmigrant (NIV) and all Iranian immigrant visa (IV) applications.
 Normally, Iranian interviews are limited to no more than twenty per
day, four days a week. During 2008, Post processed 1,036 Iranian
applicants which included 513 B1/B2 visas. Due to continuing demand
from Iranian NIV applicants, Istanbul processes a small number of
Iranian NIV applicants with the aid of Farsi interpretation from
Post's Political and Economic Section. ConGen Istanbul conducted a
similar validation study of all their Iranian B class applicants in
¶2007. Methodology of Embassy Ankara's study closely mirrors that of
the 2007 validation study.

¶3.   When adjudicating Iranian visa applications, consular officers
in Ankara rely primarily on the interview, and secondarily look to
documents to check for conformities and inconsistencies.
Adjudication decisions are based largely on age, family ties to Iran
or the U.S., travel history, and financial status determined during
interviews. Among the population sample of issued Iranian B visa
applicants, the median age of approved Iranian applicants during the
survey period was above 55 years. Eighty percent were married and
73% had immediate family in the United States. Over 50.9% were
employed as professionals, business owners, farmers, workers,
academics, or government employees. Retirees made up about 21% while
housewives accounted for about 24% of the applicant sample. Student
B class visa applicants made up about 3%. Ankara's caseload of
Iranian F-1 students, which made up about 18% of the total
issuances, was not included in this study. According to
applications, 45% of our target group had prior travel to the U.S.
and another 45.9% had traveled to Europe.

METHODOLOGY:

¶4.   Following Consular Affairs Fraud Prevention Office (CA/FCC)
guidance, post limited its study group to only visitor visa
(B-1/B-2) applicants. During the period between January 1, 2008 and
December 31, 2008 post printed 513 B class visas. Post selected an
entire year for its study period to eliminate possible seasonal
variations and conducted the study with a 50% sample of applicants
resulting in an initial sample of 256 applicants. As 33 applicants
were found to be in current status in the U.S. and an additional 3

applicants could not be verified due to lack of records in ADIS the
resulting study was ultimately based on 220 applicants.

¶5.   In order to validate the entry and exit of applicants, post
utilized access to DHS ADIS database which stores traveler arrival
and departure information. Post was successful in getting entry and
exit data for over 98% of the study group with only 3 applicants not
found in the database.

RESULTS:

¶6.   Of the 256 subjects in the initial sample, 25 (9.7%) overstayed
their visas while 195 (76.1%) traveled to the U.S. and returned
within six months. Three subjects either did not travel, or traveled
to the U.S. and were not entered into the US-VISIT databases.
Another 33 (12.8%) were still in status in the U.S. Adjusting for
the 36 applicants that could not be verified at this time the total
overstay rate for Ankara for 2008 based on an adjusted sample of 220
applicants was 11.3%.

ANALYSIS:

¶7.   In an effort to improve adjudication practices, Post analyzed
DS-156 visa applications forms, information from the Consular
Consolidated Database (CCD), and adjudicator case notes of all

validation study subjects to better understand the 25 subjects who
overstayed their visas. The analysis revealed the following
findings.

Previous Travel: Of the subjects who traveled and returned after an
appropriate stay, over 43% had previously traveled to the United
States. On the other hand only 4% of the subjects who overstayed
had traveled previously to the United States. Similarly, 43% with
previous travel to Western Europe and Canada had returned in 2008,
however, applicants who overstayed that had previous Western Europe
or Canadian travels were slightly higher at 7%.

Prior refusals: About an equal percentage of those who were
previously refused overstayed and returned. About 20% of the
subjects who returned had prior refusals, while 19% of the subjects
who overstayed had previously been refused a U.S. visa.

Age and Immediate Family: Out of the age group between 18 to 30
years old 27% were confirmed overstays. Between the ages of 31 to 59
the overstay rate dropped to 12%, and applicants over 60 had the
lowest overstay rate by age at 9%. Family ties to the U.S. do not
seem to strongly indicate likeliness to overstay. Of the applicants
that returned, 89% had immediate family in the U.S.

Marital Status: Marital status appears to be a good determinate
based on the sample group. Over 73% of married applicants returned
while only 50% of those who were single returned. Divorced and
widowed applicant return rates were 22% and 21% respectively.

Occupation: Overstay rates for the unemployed and employed were
roughly equal at 11% and 10% respectively. Iranian business owners,
medical professionals, farmers, dentists, and businesspersons had a
perfect return record. Out of 14 academics there was 1 overstay
making their return rate 93%. Engineers had an overstay rate of 25%
while students overstayed at a rate of about 14%. Housewives had an
overstay rate of 17% while only 7% of retirees overstayed. Although
the sample was small with 3 applicants, carpet sellers had an
overstay rate of 67%. All of the carpet sellers were relatively
young. The only noticeable difference about the one carpet seller
that returned was that he was married. Fraud was confirmed as both
study overstays submitted similar documents that resembled those of
refusals in recent months.

Purpose of Travel: The purpose of travel of the 25 applicants that
overstayed, with the exception of the carpet salesmen, do not seem
to indicate anything helpful in detecting likeliness to overstay.
Purposes resembled typical reasons for travel such as going to a
wedding, visiting relatives and friends, or witnessing the birth of

a child. All of these were also typical reasons for those applicants that returned.

¶8.   Comment: We will use the lessons learned from the analysis of this validation study to improve adjudication practices and train incoming consular officers. Particular attention will be given to younger age ranges, singles, and applicants without solid professional or academic ties. Given that this is the first validation study conducted on Iranian B-1/B-2 applicants for Embassy Ankara, Post looks forward to conducting a follow-up studies to see the effects of changes in adjudication practices. In addition to Istanbul's 2007 validation study, we hope the results of this study can enhance the adjudication of Iranian NIV applicants at all Iran NIV processing posts. End Comment.

JEFFREY